

I would like to preach this morning on Nehemiah chapter 1

the title of the sermon be Nehemiah man of prayer

Prayer precedes and is the beginning of mighty workings of God in the Bible:

Before God rescues the Israelites out of slavery the Bible tells us in **Exodus 2:23**

[23](#) During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God.

Hannah was barren and she earnestly cried out to the Lord for a son and Samuel was born to her.

the design of prayer:

by way of introduction let us look at the design prayer. Why that the creator of the universe is so pleased by the act of prayer.

There are several reasons worth mentioning.

First of all we must ask who is it that prays

it is not those who trust in riches

or those who are self sufficient

or those prideful in their own strength

or unbelievers

those who are content

instead it is those who are dependent needy and desperate for God those who have faith they are the ones who pray continually

and there also the ones which receive answers to others

I believe God delights in prayer because by design it puts us in a position that acknowledges our weakness and highlights his power.

I believe he delights to answer prayer in order that he might display his power in order that we might understand that we did not deliver ourselves by our own strength but God alone provided the deliverance.

Disclaimer about the context

yes we must understand the context of Scripture or we can make great errors.

However we must also understand that these stories are preserved for our benefit to teach us timeless truths about heroes of the faith that went before us. We see how they responded to the challenges of their time and how they obtained favor with God and then we can take encouragement to seek the same.

Most importantly they teach us about God and his nature and the ways that he interacts with his people. We are then encouraged to draw near to a God who as the Bible says in Hebrews 13:8 *that [8](#)Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*

[1](#)The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah.

Now it happened in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Susa the citadel, [2](#)that Hanani, one of my brothers, came with certain men from Judah. And I asked them concerning the Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile, and concerning Jerusalem. [3](#)And they said to me, “The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire.”

Nehemiah bio: he was the cupbearer to the king

for he was one of the cup-bearers of King Artaxerxes, which was a place of great honor and advantage in the Persian court, because of the privilege it gave him of being daily in the king's presence, and the opportunity which he had thereby of gaining his favor for the obtaining of any petition which he should make to him; and that, especially, since the times of his attendance always were when the king was making his heart merry with the wine

The first thing that comes to our attention is that Nehemiah is **concerned** with the state of Jerusalem.

This concern is for both the honor of God's people. and God himself. Nehemiah undoubtedly has a zeal and passion the glory of God and is concerned that his honor is maintained.

And this zeal for God's honor supersedes his own interests and his love of self.

Malachi 1:11

11For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be ^b great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts.

This text captures Nehemiah's heart, for he understood his priorities, that maintaining God's honor far outweighed any other interest that he had!

Mankind has the tendency to be self centered and to be focused only on our own needs, all the while forgetting to be concerned both the needs of our brothers and the honor of God.

This issue is directly addressed in **Haggai 1:4-6**

4"Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins?**5**Now, therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider your ways. **6**You have sown much, and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes.

7"Thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider your ways. **8**Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, that I may take pleasure in it and that I may be glorified, says the LORD. **9**You looked for much, and behold, it came to little. And when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? declares the LORD of hosts. Because of my house that lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with his own house. **10**Therefore the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce. **11**And I have called for a drought on the land and the hills, on the grain, the new wine, the oil, on what the ground brings forth, on man and beast, and on all their labors."

Jesus is the perfect example of where our priorities and loyalties are to be.

Four **second Corinthians 8:9** says

9For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.

Philippians 2:5-8 tells us

5Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,^a **6**who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,^b **7**but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant,^c being born in the likeness of men. **8**And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Read in the Gospel of John chapter 8:29

29And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him."

And of course we are to be imitators of Christ and to follow in his footsteps.

For first John 2:6 tells us

6whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

And let me ask this?

Do we care enough to inquire about the state of the church, the state of God's people? Doesn't even enter our mind?

Are we content to go about our own business when the Church is losing its influence in our nation. When we look around and see all the spiritual brokenness and ruin.

When We see that worldliness is creeping to church and the hearts of our youth have gone astray.

When We see a nation that has turned away from godly precepts does it not grieve our hearts!

Know this for certain God is looking for individuals today who have a holy zeal for his honor and honor of his church which, far outweighs their own interests!

Those who do not want ease and comfort and complacency Zion.

And look at his **response** to this devastating news in **verse four**:

Nehemiah's Prayer

4As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

We all say that we want revival but the real question is are we willing to pay the price.

Giving to God what does not cost us anything means very little to God. Look what David said

second Samuel 24:24

But the king said to Araunah, "No, but I will buy it from you for a price.... . "...I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God that cost me nothing." So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.

So what is the cost?

For Nehemiah it was sacrificing his own interest in order to be devoted to God's purposes. As we just read it involved weeping, warning, fasting, and prayer.

And as we will later read he gave up his own life in order to lead the efforts to rebuild the broken down wall Jerusalem.

I am convinced that if we could see the true extent of the spiritual brokenness and poverty that surrounds us it would lead us to weeping and mourning.

Philippians 3:18-19

[18](#)For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. [19](#)Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.

Joel 2:17

Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep and say, "Spare your people, O LORD, and make not your heritage a reproach, a byword among the nations. Why should they say among the peoples, "Where is their God?""

And after hearing this devastated news the Bible tells us that he fasted and prayed. Which is only appropriate for someone who has received such devastating news and is concerned about it.

Have you ever had something bad happen in your life that cause you to lose your appetite. I believe that this is one causes for fasting having a garden for something that far outweighs our concern for food.

Fasting did not die out in the Old Testament but it is a mighty weapon for the Christian which helps to suppress the physical needs while helping to obtain it greater focus on the true spiritual needs!

For those who are physically able it would be wise to better understand this discipline and its usefulness.

[5](#)**And I said, "O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments,**

look at what reverence he addresses God

Nehemiah was a contemporary of Daniel and it is possible that they knew each other. In the book of Daniel we have some of the most incredible statements about God's sovereignty and I am of the opinion that Nehemiah has this same understanding.

Nehemiah is one of the last books to be written in the OT and therefore Nehemiah has the luxury of possessing a fuller understanding of God. He is heard of the mighty deeds of the Lord and of his deliverances. I believe this knowledge produces faith and a greater awareness of the sovereignty of God over the affairs of men.

How much more do we process this luxury living in the last days possessing the full counsel of God's revealed will. We have little excuse not to think great and awesome thoughts about God.

It is essential that we have a biblical view of the sovereignty and power of God. For it does no good to pray to a God who does not have the power to answer those prayers.

Statements of sovereignty in Daniel

not only is it necessary to believe that God has the power but we must also understand that he is willing to answer our prayers.

6let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father's house have sinned. **7**We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses.

Persistence:

I'd like to point out Nehemiah's **persistence** for we read that he prayed day and night

he had a determination not to give up until he received a blessing from God.

God is not looking for those who are only willing to utter an occasional halfhearted prayer but rather he is looking for those who will diligently seek him!

True persistence stems from desperation and the realization that we cannot live apart from God intervening in the brokenness.

Genesis 32:26-28

26Then he said, "Let me go, for the day has broken." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." **27**And he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." **28**Then he said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel,^f for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed."

Deuteronomy 9:13-14 look what God says to Moses

13"Furthermore, the LORD said to me, 'I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stubborn people. **14**Let me alone, that I may destroy them and blot out their name from under heaven. And I will make of you a nation mightier and greater than they.'

This idea of persistence is closely associated to successful prayer and Jesus us to do the same.

Jesus in Luke chapter 11 after being asked how to pray tells a story about a man who went to ask a favor of his friend at midnight. The Bible tells us in **Luke 11:8**

8I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence^e he will rise and give him whatever he needs. **9**And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

This word impudence can also be translated as persistence

Lk 11:8, is literally "*shamelessness*" and relates to carrying out God's plan with "*unembarassed boldness*" – in the *dignity of faith*.

Also regarding prayer Jesus taught us a parable in Luke 18

1And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. **2**He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. **3**And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.' **4**For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor respect man, **5**yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.'" **6**And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. **7**And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? **8**I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

See persistence in verse one

And there are many other examples that we do not have time to mention of those who prayed out of their desperation and poverty great need with a persistence on willing to be moved until they obtained a blessing from God.

The Bible gives us great encouragement and hope for answered prayers

Matthew 6:6

6But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Hebrews 11:6

6And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him

Daniel 10:12

Daniel was much like Nehemiah that he began to seek God wholeheartedly through scripture and prayer and look with the Bible tells us about him.

[12](#)Then he said to me, “Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words.

intercession:

we also see back in **Nehemiah 1: 6-7** that Nehemiah was a mighty **intercessor** that is he he prayed to God on the behalf of the people of Israel.

Look at what the Bible says regarding intercession:

Psalm 106:23

[23](#)Therefore he said he would destroy them—
had not Moses, his chosen one,
stood in the breach before him,
to turn away his wrath from destroying them.

Deuteronomy 9:25

[25](#)“So I lay prostrate before the LORD for these forty days and forty nights, because the LORD had said he would destroy you. [26](#)And I prayed to the LORD, ‘O Lord GOD, do not destroy your people and your heritage, whom you have redeemed through your greatness, whom you have brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand.[27](#)Remember your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Do not regard the stubbornness of this people, or their wickedness or their sin, [28](#)lest the land from which you brought us say, “Because the LORD was not able to bring them into the land that he promised them, and because he hated them, he has brought them out to put them to death in the wilderness.” [29](#)For they are your people and your heritage, whom you brought out by your great power and by your outstretched arm.’

This concept of intercessory prayer is breathtaking, that one man can stand between God’s wrath and an entire nation.

And take note of this intercessory prayer did not die out with Moses are Nehemiah or the Old Testament

for we have access and a boldness to enter the throne of God through the blood of Christ with confidence

the apostle Paul made a practice of intercession as did the early church

read Paul’s prayers in Ephesians 1:15-23, 3:14-21.

Pray these prayers for your church for your family those you love.

Jesus himself was an intercessor and would see this in John chapter 17.

And in fact as we read in Hebrews 7:25 Jesus is currently interceding for us.

²⁵Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost^b those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

First Peter 2:5 refers to Christians as a holy priesthood and therefore it can be implied that we may participate in the priestly function of intercession.

Colossians 4:12

¹²Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God.

In some translations say wrestling or laboring earnestly for you in his prayers

I do not believe that we can capture in words or express the richness of the blessing that can be gained through intercessory prayer.

What encouragement

to pray for our church, to pray for our city, to pray for our nation

pray for our families and those we love.

⁸**Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, ‘If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples, ⁹but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen, to make my name dwell there.’**

Nehemiah appeals to God’s covenant:

¹⁰**They are your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand. ¹¹O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.”**

Now I was cupbearer to the king.

Invitation

Nehemiah confessing his sins and the sins of the people

Nehemiah was a prophet who stood before God on behalf of the people.

Ultimately we understand now through what has been revealed to us. That it was God's plan to send the one true prophet. The one like Moses who was going to stand in between God's wrath and our sins by dying in our place on the cross.

The Bible tells us that after hearing this testimony

we are to believe

repent of our sins turn away from wickedness and serving self and give our lives to Jesus

within our to receive his grace by being baptized for the remission of sins having our sins washed away and then receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit which he has promised

and then walking in newness of life. Abiding in Christ all the days of our life growing and maturing becoming more like him each and every day.